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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8320  
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4817  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2170  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1664  
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3721  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1663  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2419  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 2496  
RUEHBD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0633  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 000516

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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS  
NSC FOR EPHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/13/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: INDONESIA'S HOUSE SPEAKER LOOKS TO MOVE UP THE  
LADDER

REF: A. JAKARTA 488

[1](#)B. JAKARTA 204

[1](#)C. 07 JAKARTA 3096

[1](#)D. 07 JAKARTA 3027

[1](#)E. 07 JAKARTA 2948

JAKARTA 00000516 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Indonesia's legislative and presidential elections will take place next year and House of Representatives (DPR) Speaker Laksono is one of the many political luminaries plotting his next move. Long considered the Forrest Gump of Indonesian politics, Laksono hopes his penchant for being in the right place at the right time will catapult him all the way to the vice presidency in 2009. While that may be a long shot, contacts report Laksono could realistically retain the Speaker's job and perhaps even take the reins of Indonesia's largest political party -- Golkar.  
END SUMMARY.

ANGLING FOR VP SLOT

[1](#)2. (C) This is Mission's latest message providing background on the upcoming 2009 elections. It concerns DPR Speaker Agung Laksono and his ambitions. Refs A-E and previous reports examine the primary players in the 2009 elections and analyze the potential impact of the elections on U.S. interests.

[1](#)3. (C) According to Laksono's son, Dave Laksono, the Speaker has his sights set squarely on the vice presidency, believing he has positioned himself well for a shot at the job should SBY choose to remove Vice President Kalla from the ticket. Dave Laksono told poloff that his father enjoyed a good working relationship with President Yudhoyono and--as the Deputy Chair of Golkar--would represent a logical VP choice for SBY should he be interested in dumping Kalla without damaging his alliance with Golkar. (Note: VP Kalla is currently the Chair of Golkar.) According to Dave Laksono,

while no one could realistically claim to know who SBY would select as his running mate, his father strongly believed he had a good shot.

#### A LONG SHOT

¶4. (C) Mission contacts outside of the Kalla camp questioned the likelihood of an SBY-Laksono ticket, citing a number of issues. As a native of Central Java, Laksono would not bring the geographical balance to the ticket that conventional wisdom suggests SBY needs in order to compete in the outer islands. (Note: SBY is from Java and Kalla, as a native of Sulawesi and an outer islander, adds balance to the ticket.) Furthermore, Laksono's wife is a Christian and while the Speaker is himself a Muslim, her faith could prove to be a liability in a presidential election.

¶5. (C) Laksono has also publicly undercut the President on several high profile issues and a number of contacts have reported that Laksono's antics in the DPR had done irreparable damage to his relationship with SBY. (Note: Laksono led the charge against President Yudhoyono in the DPR last year following the GOI's decision to support UNSCR 1747 on Iran.) Another knock against Laksono is that the despite his high profile job, the average Indonesian has never heard of him. Finally, Laksono has developed a reputation among his colleagues in the DPR--from both inside and outside his own party--as an underwhelming political tactician, prompting many to doubt that SBY would select a running mate who would bring so little to the ticket.

#### LAKSONO'S PLAN B

¶6. (C) According to Arief Budiman, one of Speaker Laksono's top assistants, the Speaker has already launched a contingency plan to retain the Speaker job in the event that he is passed over for the vice presidency. Budiman told

JAKARTA 00000516 002.2 OF 002

poloff that Laksono was campaigning aggressively for the presidency of the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) for its 2008-2011 term and believed he had a good chance to win. Laksono assumed that if Golkar retained its majority in the DPR and he won the IPU presidency, Laksono would have a virtual lock on the DPR Speaker job for the 2008-2014 term. In such a scenario, presumably Golkar would refrain from pushing him out of the top job and potentially jeopardizing his presidency with the IPU, a job that would confer prestige on Indonesia and Golkar.

¶7. (C) DPR member Abdilla Toha confirmed that Laksono was pursuing the IPU presidency and told poloff that the DPR had thrown its collective weight behind his candidacy. Toha reported that IPU delegations in Asia, northern Africa and the Middle East had all signaled support for Laksono's candidacy, making his election perhaps a 50-50 proposition. Toha believed that the Speaker's overall strategy for winning the IPU presidency and retaining his job as Speaker was sound, if not necessarily bullet-proof.

#### TRYING TO TAKE THE HELM AT GOLKAR

¶8. (C) Meanwhile, both Dave Laksono and Arief Budiman reported that Agung Laksono also has designs on the top spot in Golkar. If President Yudhoyono drops Vice President Kalla from the ticket, both contacts asserted that Kalla would be vulnerable as the Golkar Chair and that Laksono would be well positioned to unseat him.

#### WHAT'S NEXT FOR INDONESIA'S FORREST GUMP?

¶9. (C) Speaker Laksono--who is basically friendly to the U.S.--has long enjoyed a charmed political life and many would argue that he has already ascended to heights that are typically far beyond the reach of a politician with his modest talents. That said, there is at least a small

possibility that his political path might take one last serendipitous turn, perhaps leading to his elevation to the vice presidency. After a first-term with a hard charging, brash VP like Kalla, ultimately Agung Laksono might look to SBY like the dream running-mate by comparison. After all, as a non-threatening, relative political lightweight, Laksono could deliver the same degree of Golkar support as Kalla, but without the attendant stress and headaches.

HUME